



UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH
CONNECTICUT

Testimony Presented to the Public Health Committee

In favor of SB 124

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February 28, 2014

The USJ MSW Program expects to complete initial requirements to achieve Candidacy Status at the CSWE Committee on Accreditation Meeting in October, 2014. Since CSWE has determined that programs in candidacy status have met sufficient criteria to justify recognition of graduates as having a degree from an accredited program, it is fair and proper to include graduates of programs in the candidacy stage when determining eligibility for licensure.

We calculate that as many as 60 students will graduate from our program prior to the earliest date we can achieve accreditation, October, 2016.

My colleague Professor Madden spoke about the accreditation process but I would like to speak briefly about the USJ MSW Program so that you are made aware of how the program is responding to workforce development needs in the state. We believe that a delay in moving our graduates into the workforce will be harmful to the people who need community-based clinical social work services. It would restrict the opportunities for our graduates to assume employment in the sectors they are being prepared for.

After extensive research, the MSW Program was designed to address emerging needs in the community. We have established partnerships with community agencies that provide critical services to these populations. They are excited that we are preparing a workforce ready to assume the emerging roles in direct practice.

- Recent developments in health care including passage of the Affordable Care Act and policy initiatives to help people who have illnesses and disabilities to remain in their own homes and neighborhoods will create the need for well-trained social workers skilled in clinical diagnosis and case management.
- Returning veterans face challenges reintegrating into their families, their communities, and their life outside of the military. Many have experienced trauma and are facing rehabilitation from significant injuries. Social workers have been primary providers for the VA and the need for more specially trained clinicians will grow over the next few years.

- Mental health services located within communities, accessible and relevant to families are urgently needed to reach those whose symptoms too often go untreated and can lead to public tragedies.
- Services to children and families continue to be an ongoing need in our communities. DCF and other organizations need clinicians prepared to implement evidence-based practices in community settings.

The current law was not written at a time when any new MSW programs were being proposed. Other states have language that recognizes the degree of graduates from programs in candidacy, (e.g. New Jersey, Kentucky, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, & Utah) so this proposal is not outside of mainstream thinking. The parties most harmed if the current law stays in effect are graduates. Delaying eligibility for our graduates to be licensed does not advance consumer protection in any substantive manner and would be an impediment to agencies seeking to fill positions for community-based clinical social workers.

The Council on Social Work Education has established the standards for ensuring students have achieved a level of competency in each of the areas of social work practice, a standard all programs in Candidacy must achieve. The curriculum has been designed, the faculty hired, the students are applying, and their anticipation of entering exciting fields of practice is growing. I urge your support to ensure they can become eligible for licensure at the LMSW level upon graduation.

Thank you and we would be happy to respond to any questions.